

JAMES W. CHAMBERLIN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the 19th of February 1997 and this is the interview of James Chamberlin, that's C H A M B E R L I N. No middle initial?

CHAMBERLIN: W.

Q: All right W, James W. Chamberlin. Could you say a few words, and I'll just check this thing. If you'll tell me when and where you were born, and a little about your family?

CHAMBERLIN: Okay. I was born in 1945 in Miami, Florida, but my whole family is from Alabama. So it was unusual that I was born in Miami. My father was overseas in the Army, and my mother went to be with relatives in Miami when I was born. Otherwise, I would be a third or fourth generation Alabamian.

Q: Where in Alabama?

CHAMBERLIN: Mobile, which is where my grandparents lived. My great grandfather fought in the battle of Mobile Bay.

Q: Oh yes. Damn the Torpedoes!

CHAMBERLIN: Exactly, Admiral Farragut. My great grandfather, James Williams, for whom I am named, was commander of Fort Powell, a small fort guarding the western entrance to Mobile Bay. Once on my way to a meeting in the Pentagon, I saw a piece of Farragut's flagship in the hall, and I thought, oh, my great grandfather must be turning over in his grave.

Q: When your father got out of the service, was he a professional military officer, or what does he do?

CHAMBERLIN: No, he wasn't. He was drafted for World War II, where he served in both Europe and the Pacific. He stayed in the National Guard; so, he was called up again and went to Korea as well, but he wasn't a career military man. His father (my grandfather) had served in the Spanish-American War and World War I; he was not a professional soldier either, although he is buried in Arlington Cemetery. Q: What was your father's profession?

CHAMBERLIN: My father was a civil servant. He worked for the Army Corps of Engineers district office in Mobile, as a civilian, for most of his life. He was in charge of the public affairs office.

Q: Where did you grow up?

CHAMBERLIN: I grew up in Mobile, where I lived until I went to college. I continued to go back to Mobile for holidays and vacations. I went to undergraduate school in Illinois, spent two years in the Army, and then went back to the University of Alabama for a law degree. It really wasn't until after I graduated from law school that I left Mobile permanently.

Q: Talk to us a little bit about growing up there; because this is down in the deep south, and this is particularly the early years before and even during the Civil Rights. Did you feel any of these conflicts going on around you at that time?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, a little bit, but I think I was a little ahead of the curve for most of the civil rights activities, plus I went to a private military school. I don't think that any of the schools in Mobile were integrated when I was going to school, including the one that I went to. It was all male and all white, but because it was a private school, I was better prepared for college. When I got to college in Illinois, my roommate had been on the march to Selma. I had family in Camden, Alabama, not far from Selma. My initial reaction was, what did he know about Selma and Alabama? We got off to a rocky start, but remained friends. In terms of my upbringing influencing my future career, I would say that when Vietnam came along I was more disposed to go. My father had fought in two wars, and I had gone to military school. When I was drafted, I went. In fact, because they were taking their time drafting me after they classified me 1-A, I volunteered to get it over with. That was the main result I suppose.

Q: What about when you were going to school, both to private school then off to the University of Illinois, did you get any reflection of interest in foreign affairs?

CHAMBERLIN: No, not much. I went to a small college in Illinois, called Principia College.

Q: Oh, yes.

CHAMBERLIN: I was a math major, which has always been a personal interest - math and science. That's how I ended up being a Science Officer after I came into the State Department. At Principia I was on the debate team, and I worked on a public affairs conference the school sponsored annually. The year that I was on the executive committee, however, we focused on domestic issues. I would say the main reason I came to work for the State Department was Vietnam. I was planning to go to graduate school in math, but because of the draft my options were limited. I started Law School, but after one year of Law School, I was classified 1-A. I finished the last two years of law school under the G.I. bill; then, I joined the Foreign Service because I thought it would be an opportunity to see who the guys in Washington were who pulled me out of my comfortable life and sent me to Vietnam.

Q: Can you talk a bit about your experiences in Vietnam? When were you there? What type of work did you do?

CHAMBERLIN: I was there in '69 and '70, in an artillery battery. We were in Northern I Corps which is near the DMZ on the border with North Vietnam. I was very fortunate in that before and after my tour, there was quite a bit of action in this region, but while I was there it was relatively quiet.

We had several people in my unit who were killed, but mainly because of accidents, rather than hostile fire, although in one incident we were firing at the enemy when one of our 175 mm guns blew up, killing or wounding the entire gun crew. Nevertheless, it was an interesting experience to be on a mountain top near Khe Sanh shooting at the Ho Chi Minh trail, or on the DMZ firing along the DMZ itself. When we were on the DMZ, Air Force forward air controllers would fly up and down the border. When they would spot footprints in the sand next to the river, we would start shooting at the footprints and usually the guy, some poor NVA soldier trying to infiltrate into South Vietnam who was hiding in a tunnel or something, would start running as we started zeroing in on his location. It would be a race to see whether he could cross the river back into North Vietnam, because we couldn't shoot across the river. He knew that; so, he would try to run and swim across the river. For me, it was a war of small incidents, not big set piece battles like they had in earlier wars.

Q: Were you up there around Quang Tri and Rock Pile and all that sort of good stuff?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes. The first place that I was stationed, Camp Sally, was just outside of Quang Tri, where we shot for the 101st division. Before I left, we were near Dong Ha which was further north. Those were the two main towns that I was in. In between, we were in the field on small firebases that had been used earlier by other Army or Marine artillery units.

Q: While you were there were you feeling the hot breath of the anti-war movement? While you were there or did that come later? How did that work?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, when you were there, you weren't too aware of it. We were out in the field most of the time. So, about the only news we got was from AFVN radio. The AFVN didn't cover that kind of stuff much, and so you didn't hear too much about it.

I think you really got it when you came back. In fact, that is the main reason I ended up going into the Foreign Service when I got back. Even at the University of Alabama, which was not a hot bed of liberalism, it was clear that the only thing that was interesting about the Vietnam War was the opposition to it. There were quite a few veterans that came back to the University when I did, and the way they got attention, if they wanted it, was to talk about atrocities - seeing babies killed and things like that - which of course I didn't do. I spent my whole time there in an artillery battery trying to make sure that we never fired into a civilian area, never fired without political permission from the South Vietnamese, didn't make any mistakes in the data that we sent to the guns, and so on. As far as I know, I was never involved in any kind of atrocity, and never shot at any civilians, but that was all that people wanted to hear about.

Q: How did you get into the Foreign Service?

CHAMBERLIN: When I finished Law School, I was looking around for jobs. I took the Foreign Service exam and passed, but not at the top of the ranking; they said, "You're on the list, but don't call us; we'll call you." I then ended up working a year for the Veteran's Administration as a lawyer, since I had just passed the bar. After about a year there I got a call asking, "Would you be interested in joining the next foreign service class which starts in two weeks?" My boss at the VA was very nice; he let me go with only two weeks notice, and that was it. So, about a year after law school, I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: You went in when?

CHAMBERLIN: In '73.

Q: Did you have any specialty in mind, or to just going into Foreign Service?

CHAMBERLIN: No, I was just going into the Foreign Service. In those days you had to select a cone before you joined the Foreign Service, and I had selected the political cone. I selected it just because, once I planned to take the exam, I started reading books about the Foreign Service, and the political cone sounded like the elite path. I thought that as long as I was going in, I would try that cone. So, I was, at least on paper, a political officer up until about three years ago, when I changed over to the science cone.

Q: Can you tell us a little about the class you were in? The composition? The type of people you were with?

CHAMBERLIN: There were about thirty or forty of us I think. The youngest person in the class was Marianne Casey, who became the first Ambassador. I'm trying to think who else in my class might have become an ambassador, but I can't think of anybody else, unless you count Elinor Constable, who was in her second A-100 class with me.

Q: Was it even women/men?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes it was pretty evenly mixed. There weren't many minorities in our class. We had one black woman, well maybe we had more than one, but the one that stands out in my mind ended up being arrested on her first or second tour because she was selling visas in the Caribbean somewhere. We had several other veterans and quite a few women. One unique feature about my class was that quite a few women who had to resign years earlier because they got married, came back in my class, including Elinor Constable. She started her second career in my A-100 class at the mid-level, moved up the ladder, and left me.

Q: Was there anywhere, or area that you were pointed towards when you were going through the course?

CHAMBERLIN: No not really. I think we all thought we were going to be assigned as consular officers. I think maybe there were three junior political officer positions and one or two economics positions that were available for the thirty or forty people. I figured that I would do consular work; I did, and I think almost everybody else did. There were a few people who spoke Oriental languages, for example, who I think ended up getting assignments which took advantage of their skills, but other than that, assignments were pretty much to visa mill posts.

Q: Where did you go?

CHAMBERLIN: Oh, I went to Sao Paulo, Brazil, which was a pretty good assignment because, it wasn't really a visa mill. It was interesting being in a consulate, rather than an embassy the first time.

Q: You were in Sao Paulo from '73?

CHAMBERLIN: From '74 to '76 after the A-100 course, I had Portuguese language training, and so arrived in Sao Paulo in January or February.

Q: What was the, as you saw it then, political and economic situation in Sao Paulo then?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, Brazil is one of those countries that is always full of promise, and it was then. The economy was on an upswing at the time I was there. I think things deteriorated after I left, but people were optimistic then. Sao Paulo has always been relatively prosperous, and when I was there it certainly was like living in a major, world-class city. Sao Paulo had become the automotive center for Brazil, and most of Latin America as well.

Q: Were there any political tensions at that time? They had a military government of some sort.

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, the president was a general, which created some tensions, especially because of human rights issues, but I didn't feel it much as a consular officer in Sao Paulo. I think that's one difference in being in a Consulate. It was out of the mainstream of politics, except for state politics, and economic and commercial matters, which were most important in Sao Paulo. In addition, because I was in the consular section I didn't get involved very much, even in that.

Q: Well, who was the consul general.

CHAMBERLIN: Fred Chapin was. He was nice to me in the sense that he took an interest in the junior officers, but I think not a particularly special interest. In Sao Paulo, I didn't have a rotational assignment that would have given me an insight into other sections. It was a straight consular tour, so that I got no experience in the political or economic sections or at the embassy in Brasilia.

Q: Did you have any Consular cases or problems that particularly come to mind.

CHAMBERLIN: Well, one on the American Citizens Services side. There was an American in Sao Paulo, who like me was a Vietnam veteran. Apparently he had been giving away LSD at a party when he was arrested. He had a Brazilian girlfriend who stood by him while he was in jail and became his wife. He was the main US citizen that we had to look after in Sao Paulo while I was there. In Rio they had all kinds of people visiting from the US, some of whom always got into trouble. Sao Paulo was more of a business town, and the businessmen didn't get into much trouble. So this young man became my main case. We did an interesting thing for him. The Brazilian court said that if we would write a paper about post-Vietnam stress syndrome, or something like that, the court would use it in sentencing him. So, we in the consular section did; we collected some Time and Newsweek articles on the subject, wrote something based on them, and gave it to the judge. (As a Vietnam veteran, I had mixed feelings about saying that all Vietnam veterans had a propensity to be mentally unbalanced, but I wanted to help him.)

He had to stay in jail until his trial date, which in Brazil was at least 3 or 4 months, but once he was tried and convicted, the judge sentenced him to only a little more than the time already served, so that he was soon out of jail. I went to visit him frequently, because just prior to his arrest, there had been an incident in Recife where an American had been arrested, held over the weekend, tortured, beaten and the consul had been denied access to him. We wanted to make sure that nothing like that happened with our prisoner; so, I went to go visit him frequently. He was held in a mansion that had been converted to a police station in a very nice part of town. He was held in a basement with political prisoners, who he said included the son of a past President of Peru, and some Bolivian big shots. For a prison, he had a pretty soft life there. Then once he had his trial, and the judge sentenced him to about a month in jail, he went to the real slammer. I visited him there, too, and it was a different story. It was a huge, dark fortress of a prison, but fortunately he was only there for only a month before he was released.

On one visit, I brought the prisoner's Brazilian girlfriend, who had become his wife, to give him an extra chance to see her. The prison commandant would not let her in because she had on pants, rather than a skirt. After a while, she worked out a deal whereby she borrowed a skirt from a woman working at the prison. The commandant was happy because she had on a skirt when she met her husband.

Q: What about visas, were they pretty much, run of the mill visas?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, Sao Paulo was a good place to be, because the economy was good, and it was a business town. Plus in those days, the US was far enough away that it was relatively expensive to fly to the States. So, you didn't have a lot of people with no income, who were obvious bad cases, coming in to get visas.

The two biggest categories of applicants we had were probably kids who went to Disney World and elderly Japanese. We used to fill up 747s with children going to Orlando. I pity anybody else who got on that plane. The second category was elderly Japanese, who had immigrated to Brazil, going back to Japan for one last visit. Brazil has, I think, the biggest Japanese population outside of Japan. Most of them are farmers. I think of the Japanese as being high-tech, urban workers, but in Brazil many are farmers. The Japanese would fill up 707's and 747's going back to Japan. We would issue hundreds of visas, mostly to people at least in their 60's, and often in their 80's, usually going back in the spring to see the cherry blossoms bloom one more time.

Q: So they would all fly to the United States?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, they would all stop in Los Angeles in transit, and they all wanted visas to allow them to visit Los Angeles for a few days.

Q: So you left there in '76?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes

Q: Where did you go then?

CHAMBERLIN: I came back to the State Department in Washington and I worked in the INR current intelligence office for about 18 months. The watch office worked with the SWOs.

Q: SWOs, means?

CHAMBERLIN: The Senior Watch Officers in the operation center. I worked on the INR side with the watch officers. The operation center was open 24 hours a day; the INR side of the operations center monitored intelligence reports. The Executive Secretary (S/S) monitored all of the State Department cable traffic. A lot of the intelligence went to the 7th floor, and we had more contact with the 7th floor principals than most people who were not in the Secretary's office. I think Cyrus Vance was the Secretary when I began work in INR.

Q: Well, he would have been at least half the time.

CHAMBERLIN: In any case, I spent more time in the corridors on the 7th floor than I ever spent afterwards.

Q: Where there any major things that passed your view while you were there?

CHAMBERLIN: Not that I can remember. What was interesting was that you got to see everything that was going on. As I recall, probably the hottest things that we dealt with had to do with the Middle East. There would be some breaking intelligence report, and on the intelligence side, all of the intelligence agencies would call each other's watch office in the middle of the night, and ask each other what they thought about the report. Often it proved to be a false alarm. But I don't recall that we had any real emergency while I was on duty. It seems to me that a couple of times we had debates about whether we should call the Secretary at home. There was an incident on the Korean DMZ one night, the details of which were very hazy. Intelligence analysts were worried, because of the lack of detail, that it might be serious, but although several people were killed, it proved not to be another Korean War.

Q: So did you leave INR in 78'?

CHAMBERLIN: Then I went to work on the Brazil desk for 2 years.

Q: About '78-80?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, I think that is about right. Let's see. I wrote this down. '77-'79 I worked on the Brazil desk.

Q: What was the Brazilian desk like, state some of the types of things you did?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, there were three of us on the Brazil desk, when I was there. I was the junior officer. In addition, the country director or his deputy handled the big political issues. We had a several high level visits. President Reagan's visit took enormous effort - planning speeches, scenarios for each site he visited, and so on. One of the most memorable visits was when Warner Christopher went to Brazil to read the Brazilians the riot act about their nuclear deal with the Germans. As Deputy Secretary, he probably got the frostiest reception I ever saw. I understand that no one went to the airport to bid him farewell. At least someone had greeted him on arrival, but when he left, the airport was deserted. Anyway, the senior desk officer handled political issues, another officer handled economic and commercial issues, and I did everything else. Everything else turned out to include a lot of science issues, except for nuclear matters. That was when I got interested in nuclear proliferation. It was around the time that the US sold Brazil a Westinghouse nuclear power plant. Brazil's serious interest in nuclear power began during the oil crisis in the 1970s.

Q: Well virtually '73 was.....

CHAMBERLIN: The Brazilians don't have much oil for such a huge country; they have lots of other natural resources, but no oil. So, they were really hurt by the oil crisis. Because they have to import almost all of their oil, they were looking for other energy sources. They decided that nuclear power would help them become less dependent on oil from the Middle East; so, they bought the Westinghouse reactor. But, between the time that they bought it and the time that we finished building it, Senator Glenn had passed a law that prohibited us from exporting the fuel for the reactor unless the Brazilians joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which they refused to do. They said that it was discriminatory, because it discriminates between countries that have nuclear weapons and those that do not. They did not want to become second-class members. So, while I was working on the desk, Brazil had spent about a billion dollars to build this nuclear power plant, and they couldn't get any fuel for it. In this case, by denying the fuel for it, the US was acting like the Arabs had acted a few years earlier. As a result, the Brazilians found they did not have energy independence after all. So on the desk, the nuclear portfolio became a very big issue, which was mainly handled by Fred Rondon the Deputy Office Director.

Fred and his allies eventually got the Europeans to sell the necessary fuel to the Brazilians, so that they could start up their US-built reactor. But the Brazilians were really outraged by what we did, so that afterwards they made an agreement with the Germans, to buy not only more reactors, but the whole nuclear fuel cycle package as well. It was supposed to give them the ability to take uranium out of the ground, to enrich it, and to fabricate fuel elements to run the reactors, i.e., energy independence. But if you have the capability to produce reactor fuel, you can easily enlarge it a bit and develop the capability to build bombs. That set off all kinds of alarm bells in Washington, and I ended up following the issue for a number of years. I did not deal with it on the desk, because it was too high profile an issue, but later in INR, I worked on it for several years; then after a few years break, I went back to Brazil as the science attaché^{1/2} and ended up working on it again. So it turns out that Brazil, nuclear non-proliferation, and general scientific issues has been the focus of my career.

Q: Well back to Brazil, was there any feeling about the role of Brazil in ARA? Because, I mean here it is the biggest country, Portuguese speaking, and it stands off by itself. I would think that within ARA, some people hold that Brazil doesn't play a role that is up to its potential or its actuality. Did you find that there?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, to a certain extent I did, but it seemed to depend on what the problems were. Because Brazil was perceived as a big nuclear problem, it got a lot of attention in the Secretary's office. On the other hand, the Secretary's office was even more preoccupied with Central American problems (especially under Reagan), and the Panama Canal Treaty (under Carter). Because of the focus on Central American issues, except for the nuclear issue, Brazil didn't get much attention. And I think that is probably true at other times, too. When I was working on the desk, Brazil was one of four countries handled in the same office. It also handled Uruguay and Paraguay, as well as Brazil. After I left the Brazil desk, it became a separate office, but I think I heard recently that it now has some other partners again. With the other countries in the office, there were significant human rights problems. In Paraguay, for example, I think that Stroessner was still in power. In Argentina a lot of disappearances were taking place, making that a big issue. Brazil also had human rights problems, but not as severe as its neighbors. So, except for the nuclear issue, Brazil didn't get that much attention. As you said, it got less attention than the Spanish speaking countries. An additional consideration is proximity to the US, which tends to get Congress' attention. Brazil might be fortunate that the US seems to focus on Latin American countries located closer to us, like Cuba.

Q: Did you find that you dealt with many at the Brazilian Embassy at your level or not?

CHAMBERLIN: Not as much as more senior people did, but I dealt with the embassy on a regular basis; I am trying to think on what kinds of issues, perhaps coordinating visits and various types of events. I remember going up to the Brazilian Embassy quite a few times and meeting Brazilian officers at the Department or for lunch.

Q: The Brazilian foreign service has the reputation of being one of the most professional in the world. Did you get any feeling of that?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, I did, mostly when I was the science attaché in Brazil working with Itamaraty in Brasilia. They really were very sharp. It was interesting to see them in Brazil, because of their economic problems during domestic assignments. I was there when the economy was on a down swing, and officers in Itamaraty were financially strapped without the benefits they had when they were assigned overseas.

Q: Itamaraty that was?

CHAMBERLIN: That was their Foreign Ministry. It got its name from its location in Rio de Janeiro, before it moved to Brasilia. Itamaraty officials would buy a Mercedes while they were overseas getting paid in dollars, Swiss francs, or another hard currency. They would bring it back to Brazil and sell it for enough money to pay expenses during their assignment in Brasilia. They used to say that when they were eating the back bumper, it was time to go overseas again.

Q: Who was the head of the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs?

CHAMBERLIN: Good question, I think Terrence Todman was. At least for part of my tour.

Q: Did you get any feel of the role of the ARA within the Department, or were you pretty much in your own little world?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, I was very much at the bottom looking up. I would say that the perception when I was that ARA, was that it was not one of the leading bureaus in the Department. ARA was something of a backwater, and had a hard time getting the attention of the Secretary or the White House.

Q: What about the embassy in Brasilia while you were there? What were the reflections that you were getting from reading the cables and people coming back and all?

CHAMBERLIN: In general my impressions were good. I am trying to think who the ambassador was while I was working on the desk. I think John Crimmins was ambassador when I began work on the desk. Ambassador Sayre was named during my assignment. I was assigned to arrange all of Ambassador Sayre's appointments and interviews before he went off to Brazil. That was a great opportunity for me because he called on almost every government agency, and I went along as note taker. It was my first visit to many of them. I think that the Embassy's reporting was complete and fair, as far as I can remember. I think that people thought that the Embassy was functioning well.

I remember that Ambassador Crimmins got into a quite a fight with the White House and the Secretary's office over President Reagan's visit. He thought that they were going to slight Brazil in the way they were scheduling the visit. Ambassador Crimmins demanded that the visit follow protocol. He took a lot of flack from a lot of senior people, but eventually he got what he wanted from the visit. He got Brazil treated the way he thought it should be.

Q: Well you were there most of the time during the Carter administration. Did you feel that at your level, or from the reflection of the people around you? Did you have any problems regarding human rights because this was a focus during the Carter period?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, sure. I think we did the first human rights report on Brazil while I was on the desk. The reports were controversial, and every desk was worried about how its country was going to respond. We were worried about what Brazil would say about its report. There was a young activist on the NSC staff working on Latin America, Bob Pastor, who used to give us lots of grief on human rights issues. In general the perception was that we, the State Department, were too soft on Brazil, and too soft on human rights. It was about the time that they created a Human Rights Bureau, and we argued with them quite a bit. It was always a fight to get anything cleared that had to do with human rights. We often felt that they were saying things that were incorrect, and they felt that we were often incorrect. It was almost impossible to get anything cleared in those days; we would get into big fights that delayed clearance for days.

Q: When you moved in '79. Did you go back to Brazil?

CHAMBERLIN: No, I went back to INR. On the Brazil desk I didn't get to handle the nuclear issue, but I just gave it close attention, because of my personal interest. I had a friend working in INR, who said, "We need somebody working in our office to handle Latin American nuclear issues. You couldn't handle them in the ARA bureau, but in INR you can." So, I went to INR, where I worked 3 years on non-proliferation and other scientific issues.

Q: So we are in the seventies up to '82, now?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, exactly.

Q: What was the status of INR, I mean on the Brazilian nuclear issue?

CHAMBERLIN: The situation hadn't changed that much. The main thing that had happened was that Brazil had signed its deal with Germany. Everybody was concerned about what exactly the Germans would convey to the Brazilians, and what the Brazilians would do with it - what kinds of safeguards and controls the Germans and the IAEA would have? That was the focus of what we were looking at, and how we monitored it.

Q: What was the impression at this time, with the interest of the German firms, and the German government on the controls?

CHAMBERLIN: We were pretty skeptical about the deal. The Germans were continually saying, "Don't worry about needing a lot of controls on this." One of the big issues was whether this fuel cycle process would work or not, because the Germans were not conveying a normal uranium enrichment process. It was one that a German scientist, Becker, had developed, which had never been used before. It was not at all clear that it would work, even with an enormous, billion dollar investment behind it. So, the Germans were saying privately, "Don't worry about this regardless of what appears to be involved."

Q: Well sir, I would love to get into deep classification, but I would imagine in a process between two democracies there was a hell of a lot of information around. I mean as far as things were going between Brazil and Germany.

CHAMBERLIN: Well yes and no, because the Brazilians were not helpful. They were mad at us because we had denied them the fuel for their first nuclear power plant. They tried to persuade the Germans not to tell us everything, not to have everything to be open. The Germans, of course, felt they had an obligation to Brazil for the billions Brazil was to pay for the nuclear package. The facilities in Brazil were not open. The Germans would tell us to some extent what they were doing. It was even more difficult to get information from the Brazilians. As a result, there were always suspicions about whether the Germans were telling us everything. There was intelligence, but it was seldom as good as first hand information. The intelligence focused on the bad things the Brazilians were up to. For sure, the Brazilians were keeping the stuff out of view as much as possible. So there was definitely a tension there. I don't remember the details, but I am sure there were high level disagreements, and probably a few insults that were traded between us and the Germans. Whether it was the right thing for the Germans to do, and whether they were putting enough controls on it, was very dubious.

Q: Well during this '79-'82 period were there, or was there, a movement on this Brazilian nuclear issue?

CHAMBERLIN: No there really wasn't. In fact I don't know where the nuclear plants stand today. When I went to Brazil years later, none of the German plants was operational. The sale would have been huge; they would have built up to eight nuclear power plants in Brazil, as well as the whole fuel cycle operation. I hope they have a German power plant operating by now, since they have spent so much on the deal. In essence, the results proved that there wasn't too much to worry about, whether it was because the Germans made an effort to limit what was transferred by the deal, or just because the whole thing was too expensive and too complex to begin with.

Q: Was there a concern about the Brazilians, or only concern about proliferation on principle, and that we didn't want to have Brazil it? Were they worried about what Brazil might do with it ?

CHAMBERLIN: The US was worried about what Brazil might do, because at that time Argentina was more advanced than Brazil was. From the proliferation perspective, people were more worried about Argentina than Brazil. The Argentine rivalry made them worry about Brazil. They worried that Brazil would try to do something destabilizing, because Argentina was so far ahead.

Q: In terms of nuclear advancement?

CHAMBERLIN: Right. So, the Brazilians were in fact interested in developing the technology and skills to match the Argentines. It did look like there was a little nuclear arms race on the Latin American continent. At that time, people were seriously worried about it, although now they are less worried. The Brazilians have always claimed to be a peace-loving country, and I think that is probably true. My own impression is that the Brazilians would be unlikely to develop a nuclear weapons capability. They just wanted to have broad nuclear expertise in case they needed it. Of course, Brazil, like any other country, was concerned about self-defense. If they really had felt that the Argentines were going to build a nuclear weapons capability, I am sure that they would have gone all out to match it. In retrospect, I don't think the Brazilians were so motivated at the time of the German deal. We probably over reacted.

Q: Generally on the intelligence side were there any reflections about feelers either way between South Africa, which was supposedly playing with Israel, which also had its own clandestine nuclear arsenal? Was there any contact between those?

CHAMBERLIN: Neither of those countries was my responsibility. I would say there was not much cooperation that we were aware of. There were always some nuclear experts, who we always worried were going to go off to talk to each other in hotel rooms in Switzerland. I think in terms of real assistance, there wasn't that much that I was aware of. Of course there was always a strong inclination for the US to look the other way when Israel was involved. Later when I returned to Brazil as science attaché, I did have some contacts tell me a little bit about clandestine nuclear cooperation between third world countries. Pakistan was mentioned more than any other country. The Brazilians had developed contacts with some of the other third world nuclear countries, but I don't think that much ever came of it, despite the efforts of a Brazilians to do more with them.

Q: While you were working on the Brazilian side were, were you also working on Argentina?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, I was.

Q: What was the status there?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, it has been so long ago that I can't tell you in detail what state things were in then, but Argentina did have a Canadian-designed nuclear reactor for which they had developed the complete nuclear fuel cycle. Their mastery of the fuel cycle, which includes many of the sensitive technologies to produce weapons grade nuclear material (plutonium and/or enriched uranium), was the big difference between Argentina and Brazil. Argentina was considerably more difficult to control, because it was not as dependent on outside sources for key technologies and skills. The Argentines had a lot more contact with the other nuclear countries, because for them it was a question of getting raw materials like beryllium, high quality uranium, unusual chemical reagents, and so on, which they didn't have themselves. I guess the other side was that Brazil had a little more of the necessary natural resources than Argentina did. The Argentines worked the international trade network harder than the Brazilians did.

Q: Was there any sort of brief besides nuclear matters in Latin America or do you have anything else?

CHAMBERLIN: I ended up handling all kinds of science matters, mainly because no one else in INR wanted to do it. It was very interesting portfolio, because the intelligence community had a lot of committees dealing with scientific issues on which I ended up serving as the State Department representative. Most of the other representatives on the committees were very senior people. The committees discussed all kinds of sexy intelligence stuff: what the Russians were doing in high tech areas, what countries were doing nuclear testing, and so on. I got involved in all of that, and it was really very interesting. During that time, Reagan must have been elected, and when his administration came in, there was a new, very strong interest in export control, in which I got involved. The export control issue haunted me for the rest of my career, but it always seemed to be a very difficult issue that I was never very favorably inclined toward. Nuclear non-proliferation is in many ways an export control issue, but much more specialized and structured than east-west export control was.

Q: When you talk about exports, what do you mean?

CHAMBERLIN: Well in those days, the main organization was the old COCOM regime, which restricted exports to Communist countries by western countries that were members of COCOM. They had very specific limits of what kinds of computers, chemicals, machine tools, and so on could be exported - very detailed information. As a result, there was furious argument within the intelligence community about such issues as: what type of capabilities the Soviets had in certain technologies; did they already have a certain capability at all; would a transfer give them a new capability. If you changed the specifications of a machine tool slightly, it would be more capable and it might them a quantum leap in the ability to produce better weapons. So, the arguments were endless and bitter. The two main opponents were the military and industry. The Europeans wanted to sell a lot of stuff on the COCOM list, and American industry thought that if the Europeans were going to sell it, the US should be able to sell it, too. So we, the US, were always trying to prevent the Europeans making specific exports and from relaxing the COCOM specifications, and they were always pushing us to relax them.

Q: There were some Toshiba propellers and some talk of submarine business. Were there any propellers? Or anything like that?

CHAMBERLIN: I fortunately was not involved in that. I think that happened shortly after I had left. I think the case involved the improper export of a very sophisticated machine tool. The general issue of the level of COCOM controls on numerically controlled machine tools went on non-stop. DOD was happy to have the Toshiba case to trumpet to the world to show they were right.

Q: Or, I would say, probably in the early eighties?

CHAMBERLIN: It certainly was the same kind of atmosphere while I was there, but I think that even if the export took place while I was in INR, the fight with the Japanese didn't take place until after I had left.

Q: What about the views of the Intelligence communities, that you had begun to know? What was the general feeling toward who were the bad guys and the good guys in the European and Japanese community, as far as trying to sell to the Soviet Union?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, it has been a long time and I hesitate to say. It was really us versus the world, because we wanted stricter controls than anyone else in COCOM. So, in addition to the controls themselves, the question was who was exporting illegally, in violation of the regime. In general, no one else matched our enforcement efforts. Japan was a country we were not happy with (e.g., the Toshiba case); the Swiss were often in trouble with us, as were the French and the Germans. It seems to me that the Brits were about the only people that we could depend on to toe the line and support us.

Q: Well, when you left INR in '82, where did you go?

CHAMBERLIN: I went to ACDA.

Q: You were in ACDA, under the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes. But going back to INR for a minute, I would like to mention one incident. We were working on an intelligence evaluation of the Soviet Union. The military types wanted to say that the Soviets had all kinds of high tech capabilities and mystery weapons, that they could even build weapons based on scientific principles that we did not understand. On the other hand, I felt that if we could not understand them, it was hard to evaluate them. They turned the Russians into supermen the US could not match. Eventually it got so bad, that as the State Department representative, I thought that we at least had to add some caveats to these conclusions. When I started pushing to include some qualifications in the estimate, the CIA analysts were surprisingly receptive. It appeared that they been uncomfortable with some of the DOD positions, but had been unwilling to take the lead, or at least wanted some cover from another agency. So, after a while we had gotten the estimate toned down and more rational. Just about that time Bill Casey came in and...

Q: He's the head of the CIA?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, as the new head of the CIA. And so the draft estimate went up to him. The next step before circulation to other intelligence agencies was review by senior officials at CIA. The estimate came back almost completely rewritten, particularly the executive summary, which is the most important part to policy makers. All the scary language had been put back into it, about how smart the Soviets were, what wonderful technology they had, and so on. I was very disappointed because I thought it was misleading, but since the State Department doesn't have that much clout in the intelligence community, I did not have any success getting it toned down again, especially since it now bore the personal imprint of the CIA Director. Interestingly, shortly after Casey made these changes (and many others to other parts of the CIA, I'm sure), Admiral Inman resigned as deputy director of the CIA, along with the man who headed the CIA science section. I felt that the estimate, as issued, lacked intellectual integrity, and I became an admirer of Admiral Inman for having the integrity to leave when he saw the CIA's honesty being compromised for political purposes.

Q: Casey developed the reputation of being the most political of the heads of the CIA. You have a right wing Republican administration, and the Soviets had to be ten feet tall in order to do what you were doing. He was seen as part of the problem and not part of the solution.

CHAMBERLIN: That's right. And I had a first hand look at the way he operated. I guess the CIA told Reagan what he wanted to hear in order to beef up the defense (and CIA) budget. In any case, I was very disappointed by that experience, because I felt that at the working level we had gotten a fairly honest estimate, but at the upper level it had gotten politicized again.

Q: Well speaking of politicization, look at nuclear issues. Did you have anything to do with how we looked at the Israelis' nuclear development?

CHAMBERLIN: No, I didn't. Fortunately that portfolio belonged to another analyst at INR. I pretty much kept my hands off. I think that it was very difficult to handle politically charged countries - not only Israel, but Pakistan, too. With Pakistan, Congress said that if the Administration ever determined that the Pakistanis were building a bomb, then we would have to cut off all of our military assistance. We were loath to do that because of the war in Afghanistan. There was a lot of political pressure on all of the estimates of what was going on in those countries. The one matter I worked on that could have potentially involved Israel was the famous flash detected by a Vela satellite. While it was performing its task of monitoring nuclear explosions, the satellite detected a flash, presumably from South Africa. The flash didn't have the exact signature of a nuclear explosion, but was very close and didn't look like anything else. There was a long, internal debate, which was also very politicized. As far as I am concerned, the issue was not resolved. One hypothesis was that it was an Israeli nuclear test conducted in or over South Africa. Some analysts were concerned that because of possible Israeli involvement, there was political pressure to find another explanation for the event.

Q: I don't think it ever was resolved.

CHAMBERLIN: I don't think it will ever be either, although the official conclusion was that it was a malfunction or an anomalous signal. Whether it was an unusual reflection of sunlight, or whether it was a nuclear test conducted by South Africa, Israel, or some other country, who knows? I don't. The South Africans later admitted to having nuclear weapons, which they gave up when the government changed. Although a Blue Ribbon scientific panel looked into the event, the issue was so politicized that I think any conclusion is questionable.

Q: Then you went to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Was that 1982?

CHAMBERLIN: That's right it was from 1982 to 84'.

Q: What were you doing there? What was your responsibility?

CHAMBERLIN: My job was a little unusual. I went to an office that prepared Arms Control Impact Statements. It was something that ACDA was tasked to do by legislation. In essence, I was selected for this job because I had been working on science issues in INR and knew ACDA Assistant Director Norman Terrell, who was very interested in space issues. He wanted someone working for him who would act as his special assistant for space matters. ACDA had an open position in the office handling arms control impact statements, but in addition to the duties of that office, I would go to meetings and represent him on inter-agency panels on space issues, so that ACDA could be a player. I really enjoyed it. I felt that this assignment was one of the times in my career that I may have been able to do some good while working on the space shuttle program. The space shuttle had recently become operational, and there was debate as to whether the Shuttle or some component might fail catastrophically. So, the question came to this committee: "Should we build a better space shuttle? What should we do?" The powers that be, i.e., the Congress and the accountants, said that building another one was out of the question. So a number of experts briefed the committee on the odds of the Shuttle ever crashing. What were the odds of catastrophic or partial failure? Anyway, the upshot was that the committee recommended to buy as many spares for the Shuttle as possible. I'm sure the battle was refought at higher levels, but nevertheless, it was our little committee that did the grunt work. When the Challenger disaster happened, NASA had all of the spares we had recommended, from which to build Atlantis.

Q: We are talking about the Challenger, the shuttle that was destroyed in the explosion.

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, the Challenger accident showed that the shuttle was not infallible, as many had been saying. When the committee was doing its analysis, the party line was that the odds were about a million to one that a catastrophic failure might take place. We recognized that this was another politicized estimate. On the committee, we managed to get some preparations made in case there was an accident, and they did help.

Q: Well on the space side, what was the talk in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency? You were there about the time that President Reagan announced Star Wars. Did this come as a surprise? Can you explain what Star Wars was?

CHAMBERLIN: Star Wars, SDI, or the Strategic Defense Initiative was intended to defend the US from missile attack, particularly from the Soviet Union. It envisaged a very sophisticated system that would stop thousands of missiles within only a few minutes after launch, detection and warning. It was a clear violation of the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty. It was the bane of my existence. As I said, I went to ACDA with the idea of being the agency's inter-agency civilian space representative. The payment I had to make for doing that, was to write an Arms Control Impact Statement on space arms control. SDI was contrary to several agreements. It was a serious threat to the ABM treaty, as well as the treaty on the peaceful uses of outer space. As a result, trying to write the Space Arms Control Impact Statement was almost impossible. The Administration, led by Richard Perle at DOD, did not want to admit that SDI might be a violation of any treaties. In the heated inter-agency debates that followed, ACDA was even smaller and weaker than State, and even less able to beat back DOD. As I recall, in the final version of the statement there were one or two sentences that in passing mentioned that the Star Wars program could be a problem for some arms control agreement somewhere.

Q: Had the Reagan announcement, made in the State of the Union Address to Congress, been cleared? CHAMBERLIN: It was a total surprise to everyone working on the issue, at least at my level. I had had some inklings from NSC staff that they wanted to keep their options open, but I don't know if they knew about SDI or were just reflecting a general Republican policy that opposed space arms control. I think that it was Edward Teller who suggested SDI to Reagan. Some senior officials may have known before Reagan's speech, but the people in the bureaucracy were all surprised. Certainly in ACDA, most people were upset about it; that is an understatement - they were outraged.

Q: In your experience with the space program and arms control, were there any other issues, or things we were doing that would have an impact as far as international relations are concerned? Or what we were doing around the world?

CHAMBERLIN: Nothing that I was personally involved in. The only reason that I became involved in the Star Wars program was because I had to write the space arms control impact statement. They couldn't avoid me. I got locked out of many of the meetings, and I didn't have much input. I had an impact mainly on civilian space activities. Civilian space activities involve quite a bit of international activity, especially with the more advanced western countries. NASA is a great asset, because it reflects favorably on the US. It manages highly visible programs that advance mankind's knowledge and often appeal to the public. People in other countries like to be associated with them. Many things that the State Department is interested in have to be forced down the throats of our partners, but NASA programs are usually the kinds of things that people enthusiastically choose to participate in. Big programs with big price tags, that are usually politically charged like the international space station, become more problematic.

Q: Well did you also get involved in the sharing of information, like pictures from satellites?

CHAMBERLIN: I was more involved in that issue when I was in INR, when we first began to debate what kind of overhead (satellite) intelligence could be shared, and if so, what resolution could it have. At that time, there was great resistance to allowing anyone other than the intelligence community access to high resolution satellite imagery, but that attitude has changed, mostly due to the French, I think. The French developed the SPOT satellite system with good resolution, and started making their images available. Later, as the Soviet Union fell apart, the Russians began selling a lot of their imagery; so, in recent years civilian use of satellite imagery has become more acceptable. I think we were dragged along kicking and screaming, as other countries took the lead in making high resolution imagery available. When I was working on this issue, they were splitting hairs about issues that people would not even question today. We still have a lot of the same problems to face that we had then - how to handle the availability of imagery of India and Pakistan, for example, if they show signs of preparing for war.

Q: During this 83' to 84' period, when Reagan was still talking about the evil empire and the Soviet Union, did you do anything that was cooperative with the Soviets? CHAMBERLIN: I was not personally involved in cooperative activities, although I think there were cooperative activities in space going on. Since I wasn't involved, I can't remember details about it.

Q: Now looking at the space shuttle, was this strictly within the government, or were there any others involved with this? Did the French or the Germans get involved with us?

CHAMBERLIN: No, not specifically on any of the issues I worked with, but another group of players were the American commercial contractors. They were building the components used in the Shuttle, and they also made the expendable rockets, like the Delta and Titan, that competed with the Shuttle for launches of commercial satellites. They made presentations to the committee of what they could do, and also what the capabilities of the Shuttle and the space station would be. At that time there was an exaggerated idea of the Shuttle's capabilities - that it could launch satellites so cheaply that no rocket could compete with it, making older launch system obsolete. Instead, the Shuttle has become mainly a governmental launch system, and foreign commercial launch systems, such as the Ariane, have become even more important.

Q: When you left here in 84', then where did you go?

CHAMBERLIN: I went to Bangkok to be the embassy computer systems manager which was a complete change of pace for me.

Q: I could imagine that you may have become quite a science buff by this time.

CHAMBERLIN: I had, but as my assignment at ACDA was coming to an end, I really didn't know where I was going to go. When I first went to ACDA, colleagues told me it was going to be difficult to get an assignment out of ACDA. They turned out to be correct. At that point the State Department was just beginning to install its first computers overseas. Their idea was to train Foreign Service officers as computer specialists, rather than to hire outside experts, to improve the Department's computer capability. They offered a six month course at FSI on computers, and when it ended students would be assigned as systems managers; so, that's what I did. I really enjoyed it. It was my most enjoyable assignment, because as a math buff, I was doing things I really enjoyed. As the Bangkok systems manager, I had a great staff. I had four Thai women who worked for me, who were all experts on computers. As a result, the Embassy's computers ran fine, even if I didn't show up for work. I could concentrate on the things that interested me. It was an interesting time, because they were just starting to put PC's in offices. This was a first for the State Department, which was not very computer oriented. Some of the Department is still not too friendly to computers.

Q: Was there any concern about our tie to Wang. We went down one road while others went toward IBM and Apple computers. Wang seemed to be off to one side.

CHAMBERLIN: When I first arrived in Bangkok, it wasn't much of a concern, but in time it became more apparent that Wang was not where the action was. In Bangkok, Wang was not the overriding problem though; rather, it was the lack of money to buy enough computers for everyone in the embassy who needed one. We would have taken anything, whether it was IBM or Wang. Money was the big problem. I was trying to get PC's to put on the desks of officers and FSN's, but the Department kept buying cheaper, "dumb" terminals with much less capability. Wang had its own office in the Bangkok Embassy, that also supported Bangladesh and Burma. This meant that I had four Wang engineers at my beck and call; I couldn't have asked for anything more than that.

Q: We were discussing the beginnings from 84' to 86'. What were we doing with computers in Bangkok, and how did they fit into the foreign affairs agenda?

CHAMBERLIN: We were doing two things - word processing and data processing. About 90% of the embassy did only word processing, while the admin section used the computer for a whole range of tasks, including personnel management, accounting, inventory control, etc. So, there was a split in the embassy between the political/econ portion of the embassy (which did only word processing), and the admin and consular sections which was using them for data processing, too. I think that the State Department was too strict in standardizing all the data processing programs it distributed. The data should be standardized, so that it can be compared, but embassies have different requirements for how to use that data, depending on size, how housing is handled, etc. The Department standardized everything, but didn't have the capability to keep the standard up to date. So many officers and FSN's were motivated to keep their own data on paper and PC's, and maintaining the data base required by Washington sometimes became an extra task that did not benefit the post. Although the Department could monitor the data to find out what was going on in Bangkok, as well as Hong Kong or London, for users at post, the system it was not all that great. The other big users were the Consular section. The Consular cone got into computers early on, and did a good job of integrating them into their work. In Bangkok we were one of the first posts world-wide to have a direct link back to Washington, that was used mainly for background checks on visa applicants in real time. The communications link was one of the banes of my existence there, because it was temperamental; it went down all the time, but the Consular section made the best non-word-processing use of the computers.

Q: Did you find yourself in the role of a salesman, going around telling people what they could do and how they could use it?

CHAMBERLIN: I did, and results varied. Of course, there were a few people who were used to computers, and they wanted more computing power. In general, people were scared of them, particularly the Thai FSN's. So, we started to offer some computer courses. In Bangkok, the Embassy had an advantage, because we had a RAMC, a regional administrative management center, which had many computers and some excellent computer professionals. If we had a problem, I could go over and talk to them about it. They also had extra PC's, so that we could set up classrooms there with PC's for the students. We set up a training schedule and tried to get the FSN's more accustomed to using computers and more enthusiastic about it. I think we were successful with some of the FSN's and some of the Americans. The biggest problem was getting the Thais started on computers; the problem was exacerbated by the fact that the Thai language uses a different alphabet. The local Wang dealer had a version of Thai word processing, but it did not work well enough to use professionally while I was there.

Q: Often it is the case that people tend to be rather conservative. Once they get into it, suddenly there is a take off.

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, that happened. I think one of our most interesting cases was the econ section. I tried especially hard to get the policy sections involved. The senior econ FSN did not want to use a PC, but it seemed to me that if anyone could use a PC for something beyond word processing, the econ people could. The econ counselor, to his credit, wanted a PC and was very possessive; he wouldn't anyone else in the section touch it. He wouldn't even let us take it away to work on, while he was in the office. It couldn't leave his desk, but his FSN didn't want one. We got her one anyway. We showed her how to do spread sheets, graphs and other graphics. By the time I left, she was in seventh heaven with many new reports; she loved it. That was one little success story in Bangkok.

Q: When you left there in 86', where did you go then?

CHAMBERLIN: To Brazil, to be the science officer in Brazil. I have only been a science "counselor" once, in Poland, although I had three jobs with essentially the same duties. In other embassies, the science officer often has the rank of counselor, reporting to the DCM, but not in Brazil, although my predecessor in Brazil had the title of counselor.

Q: You were there from 86' to 88'. What was your job, the major aspects?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, because I had been working on Brazilian nonproliferation matters for quite a while, nonproliferation was the main issue that I worked on. Other issues that took up substantial time while I was there were the environment and space. Space went hand in hand with proliferation; people were afraid that Brazil was going to build a rocket to launch its nuclear device, once it built a bomb.

Q: What was the status of the nuclear issue?

CHAMBERLIN: It was still tense. There were several on-going nuclear programs. Of course, there was the civilian electric power sector, which got some of its power from the US-supplied Westinghouse reactor. One of the most interesting involved an admiral who was said to be building a nuclear submarine, a submarine that would be powered by a nuclear reactor. Everyone in Washington was still worried that Brazil was in a nuclear arms race with Argentina. There was a shady character who was the head of the main Brazilian nuclear program, with offices in Rio de Janeiro. I believe his name was Rex Nazare Alves, and the initials for his nuclear agency were CNEN (The National Commission for Nuclear Energy). He was a guy who was always working behind the scenes, so you really never knew whether you could trust what he told you. He had his fingers in all the other nuclear pots, from civilian to military. He was the main person I had to deal with on nuclear policy issues, along with the Foreign Ministry, which had a nuclear office. Although the foreign ministry had an independent role, some officers there were under the thumb of CNEN. The ministry's nuclear office appeared to have a strong connection with the military nuclear group. They had their own inter-agency meetings on nuclear issues. There was one man from the Foreign Ministry who went to all the closed nuclear meetings that gave us heartburn. On the Foreign Ministry's econ side and its international organizations side were other officials involved in nuclear matters, and they were much more reasonable. For me it was almost a "good cop/bad cop" situation. I discovered that even though the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was anathema to Brazil, they were not unreasonable about non-proliferation per se, if you separated it from the NPT. Every Brazilian believes that Brazil is destined for greatness; they will not accept second class citizenship in anything, including the NPT. They made it clear that they would not sign up for something less than the Americans did. On the other hand, Brazil had been one of the leaders in negotiating the Tlatelolco Treaty, the Latin American regional nuclear free zone treaty drafted in the late 60's. The US doesn't like it, because it allows for peaceful nuclear explosives; everyone says you can't tell the difference between a nuclear explosion that is peaceful and one that is not. Nevertheless, the officials on the econ and IO sides of the Foreign Ministry were big on Tlatelolco, since they or their predecessors had worked on it. It became apparent to me that they were amenable to being more active on non-proliferation matters under Tlatelolco, and most of the Brazilian policy makers, even those working on nuclear issues, were not interested in building a bomb. They claimed that Brazil was not an aggressive, militaristic country, despite its military leadership, and they appeared to have a much lower level of resistance to discussing non-proliferation under Tlatelolco than they did under the NPT. If you mentioned the NPT, you immediately ran into a stone wall. If you got down to the bottom line issue of whether they were going to build a bomb or not, I found that they weren't interested in one. The Foreign Ministry officials were smooth; they were true foreign affairs professionals, who had clout within the Brazilian government. It saw some hope on this issue, because there were influential people (the "good cops"), who were not involved in military, nuclear cabal. On the other side, there was a group of military and civilian officials that was interested in creating a domestic nuclear capability that no outsider could control, but it was not clear that they dominated Brazilian nuclear policy. They would never say they wanted to build a bomb, but clearly they left that option open, and they were trying to keep everyone else out of their program. They realized that there was a group of senior Brazilian officials who were open to working out a responsible international position on nuclear issues.

Q: Well, were you able to engage any of our people in Washington to figure out how to work with these dynamics?

CHAMBERLIN: I would like to think I had a role, but you never know exactly why things happen. A very fortuitous event occurred. The Argentines got religion on nuclear responsibility before the Brazilians did. While I was in Brazil, the president of Brazil was invited to Argentina. Unexpectedly, the president of Argentina took him to a secret nuclear facility at Bariloche in the mountains in western Argentina. He showed him the Argentine enrichment facilities and their indigenous reactor. Then, the Brazilians were on the spot to be equally open with the Argentines. That really broke the ice. At the same time, however, perhaps with my encouragement, some people back in ACDA (who normally were the main proponents of relying on the NPT rather than the Tlatelolco Treaty) began thinking along the lines of using Tlatelolco. At least one or two people in ACDA were on the Brazilian side. So there was already a little dialogue in progress in the US, when the Argentines broke the ice. I think that it finally prompted the flood gates to open. Now Brazil and Argentina have a nuclear arrangement in place under Tlatelolco, although there are no standard IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards for this arrangement. Brazil, Argentina and the IAEA are working on this, but since my tour in Brazil, I believe that the possibility of a Latin American nuclear arms race has ended. That may be an exaggeration, but it's gone down tremendously.

Q: What about the environment. The buzz words today are "save the Amazon." Surely you must have spent a lot of time hugging trees.

CHAMBERLIN: Unfortunately, I didn't. I didn't even get a trip up to the Amazon forest, although I made a personal, tourist trip to the Pantanal. I spent a lot of time working on environmental issues, but at that time the environment wasn't as much of a diplomatic issue. I spent a lot of time trying to get good data on Amazon deforestation, the best source of which was usually satellite photography. My replacement in Brazil had to deal with what she called the CODEL from hell, a group of senators, led by Tim Wirth, who went to the Amazon and got a lot of press coverage. For the Embassy that moved the Amazon to the front burner. Meanwhile, the nuclear issue had improved so much that it could be moved off the front burner. While I was in Brazil, NASA came down with a planeload of equipment and did a major study on the Amazon, jointly with its Brazilian counterparts. Before NASA arrived, I spent a lot of office time getting clearances and talking to many government agencies, because Brazil was very suspicious about what NASA wanted to do. Number one, Brazil is always worried about foreigners doing research in the Amazon, because they themselves don't know what's in the Amazon. They have been particularly sensitive, ever since an American scientist found a mountain of iron ore there. They worry that another country will know more about the Amazon than they do. They are really tough on research clearances; so, it was a big hassle to get permission for NASA to come in. NASA wanted to do an all source study, using satellites, a heavily instrumented Convair 880 jet, and ground observers. They were looking at various atmospheric phenomena over the Amazon. The Brazilians finally agreed to the research and worked with NASA during the remainder of the two years I was there. NASA developed a good working relationship with its counterpart in Brazil, called INPE (the National Institute for Space Research). On space, I developed another "good cop/bad cop" relationship. INPE was the civilian "good cop" doing scientific research, while the military space launch program became the "bad cop," because Washington worried that their work would produce a ballistic missile.

The Brazilians had an equivalent to our forest service that should have been protecting the trees in the Amazon. However, traditionally the head of the agency was beholden to the timber industry. The regulators were not regulating the forests when I was there. One of my disappointments was my failure to help a career bureaucrat who was appointed while I was there. His appointment was an accident, because when the previous chief left, the timber interests did not have a replacement for him in place. I got an IV (USIS international visitor) grant for him to meet his counterparts in the US and begin to build some environmentally friendly contacts. Everything was going great, but within two or three months after his return from the US, he had been replaced by another agent of the timber industry. Fortunately, the forest service was not the only agency involved in environmental policy in the Amazon. Besides government agencies, there was an active Green Party in Brazil; led by Fabio Feldman, they got quite successful in getting headlines in Brazil and help from environmental groups in the States. We didn't have any major environmental crises while I was there (except for the annual burning of the Amazon), or diplomatic incidents over the Amazon. The Green Party seemed to be getting more sophisticated - doing less protesting, but using the political system more effectively. They proposed legislation, and environmental groups were lobbying successfully. There were other, informal contacts with US environmentalists. EPA representatives visited Brazil from time to time, but they tended to focus on urban pollution, rather than the Amazon. In Brazil, I learned that EPA liked to avoid the Embassy whenever possible. Tom Lovejoy, who became a senior official at the Smithsonian, had a long history of cooperation with Brazilians and also came down to Brazil periodically. He was a big help to a "Blue Ribbon Panel" delegation, led by soon-to-be Presidential Science Adviser Allen Bromley, in identifying joint scientific projects that the US had offered to fund in order to invigorate scientific cooperation between the US and Brazil.

Q: Who was the Ambassador while you were there?

CHAMBERLIN: It was Harry Shlaudeman.

Q: Did he seem to take much of an interest in the science side of things?

CHAMBERLIN: He did, I would say more often on environmental issues than on non-proliferation. I think he sometimes heard from people like the Rockefellers or the Ford Foundation on environmental issues. On non-proliferation, he got seriously involved only when Ambassador Kennedy (the Secretary's ambassador at large for nuclear matters) came to visit. I don't remember that the Ambassador personally made many $\frac{1}{2}$ marches on any scientific subject. The few times that he would call me to chat about something, it was usually the environment.

When Ambassador Kennedy visited Brazil, I made him an appointment with the head of nuclear affairs on the Brazilian National Security Council. I had to fight for the appointment, because he was secretive and didn't like to meet with foreign officials. Kennedy did not like the appointment, because he had never met the general before. After fighting for the appointment, I was not invited to the meeting. Only Ambassador Kennedy and Ambassador Shlaudeman went, probably Ambassador Shlaudeman's only official call on a non-proliferation matter. Kennedy later told me that it was a useless appointment, because they just swapped war stories. (Kennedy was a retired Army colonel.) I think, however, that it was one more chink in the wall blocking non-proliferation progress in Brazil. The general had real power over the "bad cops" who worried us, and who also isolated him from us - hence my problem making an appointment with him. I think it was useful for him to see that Ambassador Kennedy was not the devil incarnate, even if they didn't make any progress on substantive nuclear issues.

Q: How was the scientific community in Brazil engaged in the political process, as far impact on policies?

CHAMBERLIN: The scientific community was not too engaged politically, but it was too important to ignore. Brazil has a great scientific community. It's a big country; therefore, even by the law of averages, it must have a few geniuses. Brazil has its share, and the result is that there are distinguished Brazilian scientists in many scientific fields. They have something similar to our NSF, the National Science Foundation, although it didn't have much clout. (I think it was called the CNPQ, the National Research Council). The head of the council was polished and politically astute. Although he was a pretty good lobbyist, in comparison to what other parts of the government were getting, he didn't get much. In Brazil, you have to distinguish the State of Sao Paulo from the rest of Brazil, because the state itself is so rich. The universities of Sao Paulo or Campinas, for example, have more money for equipment and faculty other universities. The state's environmental agency was better equipped than the national environmental agency. There were other avenues of funding, and there was enough money to support a reasonable amount of research in Brazil, but they could not sponsor world class research with their own money. Brazilian scientists would often do research in Europe or the US, and later return to Brazil to teach. Brazil wasn't financing much of the world class research that they were involved in.

Q: Was part of the hunting license to keep an eye out for research and development that might be of value to American firms, and provide opportunities and send notice back to the States?

CHAMBERLIN: Yes, but I didn't have a very successful hunt. I particularly hunted for biotechnology, which at that point appeared as though it would take off. The Brazilians had some good people working in that area, but I never found anything very promising. From the Brazilian perspective they could really have something to contribute, because they have the Amazon with all its plants and bugs that could contain substances useful in pharmaceuticals. I, at least, never found a good connection. American corporations were pretty good at taking care of themselves. The AIDS epidemic was just hitting Brazil while I was there. There was considerable interest in the issue, but mainly from the public health perspective of preventing the spread of the disease, rather than high-tech attempts at treatment. USAID had one officer remaining in Brazil; he and I often worked together on AIDS matters.

Q: In '88 you left Brazil for where?

CHAMBERLIN: I went to Washington to serve in the political military bureau. I was there from '88 to '90.

Q: What were you doing there?

CHAMBERLIN: The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Going back to when we were talking about INR, at the end of my tour there, one of the political appointees from the Carter Administration had come up with, and pushed, the idea of an international missile proliferation agreement. When Reagan defeated Carter, the appointee left, but the Reagan administration was very interested in the idea of a missile control regime. Because of the change of administration, I ended up being one of the few people within the State Department, even though I was very junior, who knew anything about the issue. So, I helped to draft some of the first briefing papers to get the regime off the ground. The first thing we did was to make a trip to Europe to see if we could get our European allies on board. Thus, I was present at the creation of the MTCR. I continued to work on the MTCR in ACDA, but I left Washington for Bangkok before any agreement was signed.

Q: What do you mean when you say a missile control regime?

CHAMBERLIN: It's a non-proliferation regime to control the delivery system for nuclear, chemical or biological warheads, in case a country of proliferation concern were to develop them. We would at least be able to force them to deliver a warhead by air, which is a little easier to stop than delivery by missile. So, that's what it means - limiting strategic missile delivery systems. The MTCR went through a long gestation process. At the very beginning we came up with certain guidelines about how much a warhead would weigh, how far it should travel to be considered "strategic," and what technologies were essential to these capabilities. These specifications were eventually included in the agreement. The MTCR was intended to address strategic implications, rather than tactical implications of missiles. Then we worked backwards from that ultimate goal. Because of my experience with Brazil's nuclear program and their opposition to the NPT, I wanted the new missile regime to allow for peaceful uses of rocket technology - to follow the Tlatelolco Treaty model, rather than the NPT. But this idea ran into a buzz saw at DOD with Richard Perle and his minions. My colleagues at ACDA, who preferred the NPT model, were not too supportive either. I still believe that the type of regime I proposed would have been more easily justifiable and would have more easily attracted the adherence of the proliferating countries we were worried about. But it would have been harder to monitor and enforce. In the end, I lost, and enforcement carried the day, but it created headaches for me on subsequent tours.

I was not the only one who differed with DOD's approach to export control. When we were drafting the first version of the MTCR guidelines, I worked closely with Bill Root, the office director of the office in EB handling COCOM issues, who had worked on export control issues for years. COCOM already had specifications for controlling some of the items we wanted to control. One morning while I was working with Mr. Root, he was called away to the phone to talk to Richard Perle's office about some COCOM issue. When he returned, he was not happy, but we continued our work. We broke for lunch, but when I returned, his staff told me that he had retired, effective immediately, and would not be returning to work.

Now we have almost caught up with my new assignment to PM, but first a word about how my loss while in INR and ACDA came back to bite me in Brazil. The Brazilians had a national space program. They were planning to launch a small radio relay satellite with their own space launch vehicle. They also planned to place radio transmitters throughout the Amazon that would send out rainfall, temperature, and other environmental information. The satellites would collect this data from remote locations in the Amazon and relay it to a ground station for processing. So, Brazil wanted a new ground station to track the satellite and collect the data down-linked from it. They had one, older ground station, used mainly to receive images from the US Landsat satellite, and they wanted to build a new one for the new satellite. So, they solicited bids, and the Japanese won. I got an anguished call from the embassy's commercial counselor saying, the Japanese had won, but the existing ground station was American. Could we do anything to persuade Brazil to buy American? I had good connections with INPE, the civilian space agency; so, I called one of my contacts there. The INPE engineer said that they had always wanted to buy American, but a senior official had made the decision to buy Japanese, despite the recommendations of the technicians. The American bidder had been disqualified on a technicality. The technicians told us that if we made a stink, we could probably get the decision reversed. We escalated the issue within the Embassy and pressed the Brazilians to reconsider. They reversed their decision and awarded the contract to the American company. I was elated. Then, a few months later, we found out that DOD had denied the export license for the ground station, arguing that it might be used for missile telemetry or some other military purpose. My INPE contacts, who had been my buddies, became my enemies. They asked, "How could you do this to us? If we had gone ahead with the Japanese bid, they would have delivered. We could have had the ground station built in a year, but you denied our export license." In Washington, the State Department was willing to fight to reverse the DOD decision and get the license issued. The fight went on for about a year; by then emotions had flared on all sides. Although approved, the ground station would always leave a bad taste in the mouths of the Brazilians. In the process of numerous phone calls to Washington trying to get the license approved, the office in PM handling the MTCR, asked me to come work for them. That's how I ended up working there. By this time, the Missile Technology Control Regime had been signed and was in operation. It's not a treaty. It's more like a group of unilateral undertakings, because other countries were reluctant to sign a treaty that reminded them of the NPT. Some of them had been burned by the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Now they were reluctant to take on the third world again for another non-proliferation regime. (If our proposed agreement had looked more like the agreement I recommended in INR and ACDA, we might have been able to negotiate a treaty, rather than the cumbersome arrangement that we ended with, but we'll never know.)

When I returned to Washington, the PM office was processing applications like the one in Brazil which had been turned down. Most of the decisions were made at inter-agency meetings. In addition to making decisions on licenses for US sales, we used intelligence to monitor whether other countries were selling controlled items that they should not have been selling, even if they weren't part of the regime. The big decision while I was there, was how to enlarge the regime to include additional countries. Originally I think there were seven countries, five big Western European countries, Japan and the US. The biggest question was, "What about the Soviet Union?" Next, "What about China?" Finally there were countries that were smaller suppliers or were on the borderline between being suppliers or buyers, like Brazil and Argentina.

The Argentines appeared to be building a powerful missile, the Condor, that violated the guidelines. In Argentina, once again, the argument was whether this rocket was for peaceful use or military use. Of course, the country building a rocket says it is for peaceful use, although others see it as ready to carry a warhead, or they argue that it is too small to be covered by the MTCR. We convinced the Argentines to give up the Condor missile, after beating up on them diplomatically for months, if not years. One of their main suppliers was in Italy. When we finally got to the Italians, they helped convince the Argentines to give up the program.

Q: How did that come out in the time you were there?

CHAMBERLIN: I don't remember all of the details, but we sent a team to Italy, which caught the Italian company red handed with some parts they said they weren't sending to Argentina. Someone found boxes addressed to Argentina, and ordered that they be opened up. Inside were the parts the Italians said they weren't building. That was the watershed; it became clear that the Argentines were going to have many more problems obtaining these parts. On the Argentine side, the Argentines were backing off their nuclear program, so it didn't make much sense to pursue the Condor Missile either. In the spirit of getting the American non-proliferation crowd off of their back, they began to back off on the missile program, too.

Q: What about arrangements with the Soviet Union in this eighty-eight to ninety period?

CHAMBERLIN: We had a major debate on the issue, led by Dick Clark, the Assistant Secretary for PM. I think that all of us who were working on MTCR at State thought that it was essential to bring in the Soviet Union. Since they were the other missile superpower, they were really an essential part of the regime. It didn't make much sense to have a regime of only Western missile powers. I was a member of one delegation to Moscow to brief them on the MTCR. The Soviets made fairly positive noises, without saying that they were ready to sign up. Since I favored bringing in the Soviets, I had a hard time understanding the opposition, but there were several reasons. Some of the arguments against bringing them in were: the Soviet export control system was incapable of controlling missile hardware and technology, even if they adhered to the regime; because the regime was a series of unilateral undertakings making decisions by consensus, the Soviets might block the operation of the MTCR; because both the US and the Soviets were supplying arms to their proxies in the Afghan war, we did not want to impose restraints that would interfere with our activities there. We had at least two inter-agency meetings where we hashed out the issue of Soviet membership. There was strong disagreement, but we got all but one or two American agencies on board for proposing Soviet membership to the current members of the MTCR. The US decision-making process also operated by consensus; so, a majority was not enough. I drafted instructions to the MTCR delegation authorizing an invitation to the Soviets, but I couldn't get the instructions cleared by the NSC. The NSC claimed to be neutral, but its lack of leadership was effectively a vote against inviting the Soviets. They were never helpful on this issue. As a result, the day we were scheduled to leave for an MTCR conference in Ottawa, we still had no cleared instructions from the White House. By then, every agency had agreed to invite the Soviets except DOD. As I recall, I had sent two alternative telegrams to the NSC for approval - one saying to invite the Soviets, the other saying not to. The instruction telegram that arrived in Ottawa the next morning was neither. It was an unclear compromise. We didn't know whether to go ahead or not. The head of delegation called back to Assistant Secretary Clark, who said to go ahead and invite them. As a result, we got agreement from the other MTCR members to invite the Soviets, but when we returned to Washington, the US decision was reversed. We had to go back to the other MTCR members and say we were sorry, but we didn't want to invite the Soviets after all. The Clinton Administration made it a top priority to bring the Russians into MTCR, but by then their empire had disintegrated, so the status of the newly independent states vis-a-vis MTCR was unclear.

Q: How about China during this time?

CHAMBERLIN: China was always a big problem. Just recently there have been articles in the papers that they have sold missiles that exceeded the MTCR guidelines to Pakistan. That is nothing new. Getting the Chinese to abide by the MTCR guidelines has been an on-going exercise. We talk to the Chinese, who say they are not doing anything wrong. Then we talk to the Pakistanis, who also say they are not doing anything. Yet, reports and allegations of missile-related transfers continue to surface. I think it remains one of the most difficult issues that we have with the Chinese today.

Q: Was Israel a factor in this?

CHAMBERLIN: As usual, Israel was a special case. The Israelis have great technology and great scientists, who can build missiles exceeding the MTCR guidelines. They have an anti-missile program, the Arrow, for which they have received help from DOD. The cooperation suited DOD's purposes, because it gave them an opportunity to work on technology that was on the borderline of being banned by the ABM treaty. The Israelis liked it because it gave them access to technology transfer that probably would have been banned to any other non-NATO country. The justification for the cooperation vis-a-vis the MTCR was that the Arrow was a defensive, not offensive, missile; the justification vis-a-vis the ABM Treaty was that the Arrow was to defend against tactical missiles, not strategic missiles. There was no end to problems with what the Israelis were doing. In addition, the Israelis sometimes exported missile-related equipment and technology to other third world countries.

Q: Did you have to handle Israelis with kid gloves?

CHAMBERLIN: I can't say that we used kid gloves, but we did treat Israel differently from other countries. I think the working level of the State Department usually tries to treat Israel like other countries, but the pressure for favoritism comes from the policy levels, who usually have to clear any significant action. As a result, the process for demarching Israel was different from the way you would demarche India, Pakistan, or Argentina. My "special" country continued to be Brazil. Just before my tour in PM ended, the Office of Munitions Control accidentally approved a license to carry out a process in the US to harden some metal, industrial pipe that the Brazilians planned to use for rocket bodies for their space program. Had the process worked as it was supposed to, our committee would have been consulted in advance, but because this was an unusual type of application, we were not. The hardening procedure was not clearly covered by the MTCR, but the hardliners on the inter-agency committee had a fit when they found that the pipe had already entered the country, and some had already been treated. Because it was not covered by the MTCR guidelines, and because we had assurances peaceful use only, from senior Brazilian officials that I knew personally to be men of integrity from my tour in Brazil, I argued forcefully to allow the process to continue. Although discussions of the matter were treated as classified within the US Government, because I was winning, someone leaked the matter to the Washington Post or the New York Times. (I don't remember which.) The leak created a (small) uproar in Congress, which knew little about the hardening process or the people in Brazil who had promised to use the pipes only for legitimate purposes. After I left PM, the deal was halted, and the remainder of the pipes were not treated. For non-proliferation, this was the "super-safe" course, but I believe that for non-proliferation to work in the long term, we will have depend on trust and cooperation as much as intelligence and threats. Reagan said to trust, but verify; for Brazil there was no trust. The US position that all Brazilians were untrustworthy, I think, set back our dialogue with Brazil on non-proliferation matters.

Q: You left there in 1990, and where did you go then?

CHAMBERLIN: Then, I went to the Bureau of Oceans, International Environment and Science (OES) and worked on environmental issues.

Q: From when to when?

CHAMBERLIN: Two years, 1990 to '92.

Q: What were your main concerns that you were dealing with?

CHAMBERLIN: Our issues were forests and animals, all sorts of living resources. At that time OES had three environmental offices - one dealt primarily with global climate change, another dealt with industrial chemical issues, and then there was my office that dealt with matters such as endangered species, forests and other conservation issues. At that time, the office also handled international health issues. OES has never had an ideal office in which to place health issues, although they are becoming increasingly important internationally, especially for cooperation on responding to the AIDS epidemic. So, we had an M.D. in our office as well, who handled health issues that didn't fit anywhere else.

Q: Were there any problems that you had, or issues that you had to deal with on this?

CHAMBERLIN: About this time, the world began gearing up for a big environmental conference sponsored by the UN in Rio de Janeiro, UNCED (the UN Conference on Environment and Development), held in 1992. I got to OES just in time to do a lot of the spade work getting ready for it. At first our office had the main responsibility for UNCED preparations, but it was clear that UNCED was going to be too big an issue for our office to handle alone. The State Department created a new office which ended up being at least three times as large as ours, with many of the staffers seconded from other agencies. For our office, the biggest issue was the Biodiversity Treaty. I was the deputy director of the office; the director was Eleanor Savage, who was the lead negotiator for the treaty. The negotiations took place in Nairobi; so, Eleanor was gone much of the time. The general idea of the Biodiversity Treaty was to create a framework for identifying, using and protecting plant and animal resources. We already had the CITES Treaty (The Convention On International Trade In Endangered Species), but the Biodiversity Treaty was to go beyond CITES, in that it provided a framework for developing countries to grant access to flora and fauna that were not threatened or endangered. The treaty negotiations turned into a "third world vs. the industrialized countries" exercise, like many other environmental treaty negotiations. The developing countries wanted lots of money for development, and for allowing access to their natural resources, and so on. The Egyptian who was the chairman of the negotiations was very pro-third-world; as a result, the final document emerged very one sided. It went down to the wire, whether the US was going to sign it or not. In the end, we did not. In Rio, President Bush did not sign the Biodiversity Treaty, and it is still not signed today. I was not as deeply involved in the treaty as Eleanor was, but she was with the delegation in Rio when the final decision (or at least the official recommendation to the President) on signing it was made in Washington. As I began to work the issue in her absence, I was surprised that there were several officials in the Bush Administration who were not so negative on the treaty, in spite of the general perception that Republicans are opposed to environmental issues.

Meanwhile a number of delegations in Rio were trying to work out a compromise that would be acceptable to the US. The Brazilians (I can't escape them) were working on the text of a compromise, which they circulated to find out what an absolute bottom line was for the US. The US delegation sent a classified fax to Washington about the proposed compromise. Someone leaked it to the New York Times. The day after the fax arrived in Washington, it appeared on the front page of the New York Times, which effectively killed any chance we had of making a deal, because the Brazilians were so embarrassed that they had appeared to be willing to sell out their third-world colleagues. On the US side, the article put the spin on the leak that the US Government was preparing to sell out the US pharmaceutical industry. The leak worked; it killed any chance of a compromise, and since then there hasn't been any enthusiasm for taking on a Republican Congress to get US adherence to the treaty. (Although some in the Bush Administration felt that fears about the treaty were overblown, I don't think that the Republican Congress would look at the treaty as objectively.) The FBI investigated the leak, but as far as I know, never found the culprit. My personal opinion was that it was someone in Vice President Quayle's office, since his office was leading the campaign against the treaty. I was struck by my "leak" experiences in PM and OES at how willing conservatives were to violate the law by leaking classified material. As a child of Vietnam, I had always thought that was something liberals did.

Q: The Rio meeting was not an American diplomatic success. In fact we ended up sort of looking like the curmudgeon and all.

CHAMBERLIN: From my perspective, after working on the environment in OES for two years, the conservative Republicans would not let us sign anything the least bit environmental. In Rio we ended up opposing every major initiative except Global Climate Change, where we had done enough fighting in the years preceding the Rio meeting to produce an agreement we could sign, because it was sufficiently watered down and toothless. On almost every other issue, we were at loggerheads with the rest of the delegates. As a result we got a black eye, rather than a positive image.

Q: Did you get any feel from anyone who was involved in this about how President Bush felt? Did the State Department let him down? I know he was in a position he did want to be in.

CHAMBERLIN: I didn't get the feeling that he resented the State Department. The main resistance came from Quayle's office. The leaders of the opposition to the Biodiversity Treaty were Quayle and William Crystal, who appears regularly on TV as a Republican commentator. Quayle's staffers were the point men for this opposition to such an extent, that if anybody was responsible for the negative position, they were. I'm sure they thought the State Department was too spineless to fight for the US position in the preparatory meetings for the conference. As one of those whom they would have classified as a spineless State Department type, I think their opposition was unrealistic and unnecessary. My impression is that most US pharmaceutical companies don't think that they would be placed at a disadvantage if the US signed the Biodiversity Treaty, although the Vice President portrayed them as the main opposition at the time. Opponents say that the treaty would put restrictions on US access to biological materials in other countries, but now that many other countries are signatories, it may turn out to be just the opposite. If we don't play by the regime's rules, then we may end up as the odd man out, with more difficulty gaining access. Therefore, I think the drug companies would be just as happy if we had signed up and gotten on with the process, rather than fight a rear guard action, but I might be biased.

Another interesting defeat I suffered in OES was an attempt to allow people with AIDS to visit the US without a visa waiver. HHS (the Department of Health and Human Services) had done a major study that had concluded that HIV/AIDS was not a highly contagious disease, because it is not transmitted by ordinary contact. Therefore, it proposed to remove AIDS from the list of highly contagious diseases that could bar entry into the US, leaving only tuberculosis on the list. However, Sen. Jesse Helms and other conservatives led a mass mailing campaign to object to the proposed regulation. HHS received several hundred thousand letters. The M.D. working in my office was outraged, because the regulations called for a scientific decision, and the scientists agreed that HIV/AIDS should be removed. So, he wanted to try to get the US Government to do the right thing, as required by law. After a number of inter-agency meetings, we sent an action memorandum forward proposing that the scientific panel's recommendations be implemented; the memo was signed by the Assistant Secretaries for OES and Consular Affairs, as well as by the relevant lawyers. It disappeared into a black hole on the seventh floor. Not only were the principals worried that AIDS was highly contagious, they were apparently worried that the memo itself was contagious and were afraid to touch it. The result was not unexpected, but it was interesting to see that there was no great interest in seeing the letter of the law carried out. Interestingly, the doctor working on this issue in my office quit the State Department and went to teach at a university in Washington state. Add him to my list of people with ideals who left the government.

Q: After participating as a sterling diplomat in victory, where did you go then?

CHAMBERLIN: Then I went to Poland. First, I went to Polish language training. Then I went to Warsaw.

Q: You were in Warsaw for how long?

CHAMBERLIN: I was there from '93 to '95, plus a year of Polish language training from '92 to '93.

Q: What were you doing there?

CHAMBERLIN: I was the Science Counselor. The main thing that occupied the office was a joint program with the Poles to sponsor scientific research projects. It was much different from anything I'd ever done before. It wasn't so much a policy job as it was administrative. The US contributed about a million and a half dollars annually, and so did the Poles. We had annual or semi-annual meetings to review proposed projects and decide which projects should be awarded grants. In the science office, we then spent a lot of time administering the money, issuing checks, and so on. A Polish office managed the Polish funds. The one policy issue that firmly belonged to the science office portfolio was environment. The communist years had left an environmental mess in Poland, and the science office was the embassy's focal point for those issues.

There was another issue, the MTCR, which was important to Poland and which I knew well, but which was not part of the science section portfolio. The science section dealt with one, very specific nuclear non-proliferation issue, the nuclear suppliers group, which allowed me to keep my finger in an issue that interested me. Because my predecessor had not been interested in policy issues, the science section got copies of almost no other policy cables. I usually learned about policy issues with a science connection through the econ or political sections, or in country team meetings. The communications section said that I could not get these copies of policy cables, because cables were distributed in hard copy on carbon paper, and all the carbons were spoken for by other sections. Therefore, I learned only through my Polish contacts on nuclear matters that the US was blackballing Polish membership in the MTCR. I was dumbfounded, because Poland had been so helpful on non-proliferation issues. Ambassador Strulak, with whom I dealt most frequently on nuclear matters, served as rapporteur of the international conference to extend the NPT, which was very contentious because of the third world concerns that I have spoken about earlier. He was extremely helpful to the US in getting the NPT extended, and was working hard to solidify Poland's excellent credentials as a proponent of non-proliferation. Non-proliferation was a priority of Poland's for the same reason NATO was a priority - national survival. Poland is surrounded by powerful countries that have not hesitated to invade Poland from time to time over the last thousand years. The fewer arms that surround Poland, and the stronger the framework of safeguards and verification, the better for the security of Poland. Therefore, Ambassador Strulak was genuinely upset at being blocked from joining the MTCR by the United States. After he raised this with me, I investigated and found that he was correct about what was going on. Washington would not explain exactly why it was so, but it seemed to be for the same reason that people had opposed Soviet membership years earlier - the MTCR organization was so cumbersome that it couldn't deal with many new members. Since the Poles were not threatening, it was better to bring in the potential bad boys. From the Polish side, however, they needed membership in an international regime to justify their export controls, according to the law creating those controls. I was disappointed that every time I ran across the MTCR, which I helped create, it had a negative impact on the country to which I was posted. My only consolation is that if it had been created along the lines I had suggested, it might have been easier to work with. In Poland, MTCR was not my issue, and those responsible for it, didn't want to fight the decision to exclude Poland.

Q: What was your impression of the science exchange program? Was there much that the US could gain by coming to Poland, as opposed to what the Poles could gain by coming to the US?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, I would say yes, the US did gain from the exchange, but it was not entirely even. I am sure that there was more benefit for the Polish side than for the American side, although there were advantages for the American side. It sounds terrible, but because of the intense environmental degradation in Poland there were Poles who had been exposed to higher levels of some substances than we ever encountered in the United States. It was an opportunity for American scientists to find out what the effects of high levels of these pollutants were. They also had unique capabilities and expertise in Poland. The Poles have always had very high class scientists, but they tend to be very theoretical. The big tension that we had in approving projects was that they wanted to stress theoretical physics and mathematics, while we wanted to stress environment and health.

I have bitter memories of our involvement in the program, because it was canceled while I was there, mainly because of the budget cuts made by the Republican Congress. For whatever reason, I was the guy who got to deliver the message to the Poles that the US was quitting. The agreement was embodied in the joint US-Poland science and technology agreement, which said that it would be in force for five years from the date of signature. It had two more years to run, but we said that we weren't going to continue to contribute our share. The Poles were not happy about it. My objection to the US decision was more political than scientific. Many of the best scientific projects will get funding from somewhere. For example, NIH (the National Institutes of Health) can fund health projects jointly with Poland, although it would be nice to have this umbrella organization to work with. NSF (the National Science Foundation) can fund some projects in physics and math. But overall, US-Polish scientific cooperation will shrink.

While Poland has done very well financially after the fall of Communism, Polish scientists have done relatively less well, because the Communist system subsidized science. In the old days, Polish scientists had relatively good salaries and prestige. They had little access to hard currency, which this joint program provided. After the fall of Communism, their income and stature went down considerably. I thought it was impolite, if nothing else, to cancel this program when many Polish scientists were thrashing around figuring out to make ends meet. In order to make extra income, university professors would often become consultants. The Poles were really hustling; they didn't let any grass grow under their feet, but they often had a hard time, depending on what their specialty was. Environmental professors had an easier time making money on the outside than nuclear physicists did. There were real hardships imposed on scientists. While our small grants didn't make a life or death difference, it was not a pleasant thing for them to lose a little extra funding. It was the wrong thing for the US to do; we should have made these people's lives easier and not tougher. Many of them had been close to the US when it was dangerous to do so. For those years of friendship and loyalty, they got nothing.

Q: What about on the environmental side, how did that involve you?

CHAMBERLIN: The main way it involved me was through the Ecofund in Poland, which was one of the greatest programs that I have ever been involved in. In '88 and '89, maybe '90, the US was forgiving Polish debt. The Poles suggested a debt for environment swap, and as a result they got an additional ten percent of the Paris club debt, which amounted to something in the neighborhood of 300 million dollars. (There was some speculation that this extra forgiveness was payment for Polish help in getting CIA agents out of Iran or Iraq.) Instead of making payments to the US government on this debt, the Polish Treasury paid the Ecofund in Poland. Because of the debt payment schedule, at first the fund was getting about seven million dollars a year, because that's what the Polish government would have paid to the US. In the out years they would have paid 50 million a year. We got an agreement to restructure the payments to make them equal, which meant the fund got about 25 to 30 million a year to spend on environmental projects.

The Ecofund was headed by Maciej Nowicki, a former minister of environment, who had been one of the good guys in the shift from Communism. I was impressed that he was honest, smart, and industrious. He attracted good people to work for the fund. When I arrived in Warsaw, the Embassy was entitled to an observer at the Ecofund meetings, but he couldn't vote on anything. Nowicki became worried that one of the changes in government would mean that he would be replaced by a political hack, because some of the old guard Communists didn't like him. They wanted to distribute the Ecofund money to their Communist cronies. I began to work for Washington approval for a US vote, so that we could help him if he needed it. Washington was willing, but not enthusiastic, because a vote would mean many clearances for each project, like the World Bank and IDB. I convinced them that these projects did not need the same level of vetting that World Bank projects did. In the end, Washington approved a US vote.

Working on the fund was one of most the most rewarding things I did, because most of the projects they funded were good. The Ecofund would pay for only 10% or 15% of a project, which meant that the project sponsor would have to find outside funding for the bulk of it. Ecofund support was like a seal of approval for other agencies. One of my frustrations in the foreign service was that so much of what I did was paper shuffling and discussion, without seeing any concrete results. The Ecofund was actually doing projects - preserving wildlife refuges, building small dams and smokestack scrubbers.

The other, negative, side was of my experience was an AID project to build a smokestack scrubber on an electric power plant in Krakow. A scrubber removes the sulfur from the exhaust gases and thus reduces the acid rain due to the plant. Under Department of Energy management in cooperation with the Polish management of the power plant, the scrubber was built and dedicated. I went to the dedication. The scrubber wasn't running at the time of the dedication, but the contractor said that it needed just a few more screws and a little tweaking, and then it would run. A few months later it still wasn't working. It turned out there were serious problems with it. The DOE manager was very critical of the Polish role in the project. He said that the Poles who were managing the electric power plant hadn't cooperated with us, but he thought that if we had half a million dollars more, we could finish the project. He and I went to the Ecofund to plead for half a million dollars more to finish it. At the Ecofund board meeting, most of the Polish board members were dead set against approval. They had talked to their contacts, and they had all been told that the scrubber was a piece of junk. The Ecofund would be throwing good money after bad. I argued very strongly for approval, and the head of the fund argued very strongly for it, because he was appreciative of past US help. In the end, the fund approved the grant because the Embassy was for it. I now felt that I had a personal stake in the project, but the deeper I got into it, the worse it looked. The Americans were to blame for a lot of the problems, going back to the original design. It was a real mess. The last I heard, the scrubber is still not running. I think the total cost was about fifteen million dollars, of which the US paid about half. It was a real disappointment to me to be associated with a US failure. Krakow has a lot of environmental problems. It is an old medieval city, on which you can now see the effects of acid rain. Sculptures and buildings have been eaten away over the years, in part because of coal-burning, electric power plants built under Communism, when there were no environmental controls. In addition, many residents of Krakow have respiratory diseases and other health problems which could be due, at least partially, to poor air quality. It would have been nice to get this scrubber to work to help clean up the air quality. In addition, it was supposed to be a demonstration project, to encourage the Poles to build similar, American-made scrubbers on other power plants. In fact, its impact was quite the reverse, and the Poles often extolled the virtues of a scrubber that the Dutch had built for another power plant.

Q: We are talking about '95 to '97, so in '97 something must have happened?

CHAMBERLIN: Well around '96. The science joint fund was the real meat and potatoes of the office; the environment took about 30% of my time; the joint fund, about 50%, and other issues, about 20%. Once we lost fifty percent of the office by abolishing the joint fund, it was hard to justify keeping the office open; so it was abolished. The Ambassador was very considerate and said, "You can finish your tour in Warsaw, and when you leave, we will close the office down." A few months later, the science counselor in Rome quit and left the State Department. So, I got a call from personnel in Washington asking how I would like to go to Rome immediately. I talked to my wife, who was working at the Warsaw Embassy, and she agreed that we could leave for Rome. From the moment we arrived (or before), the job in Rome was nothing but problems. Even before I left Warsaw, I was furloughed by Rome, the day before the government shut down.

Q: Furlough is kind of a work leave without pay, because of a dispute in the government.

CHAMBERLIN: I wasn't sure if I should travel to Rome while on furlough status. Along with the notice saying I was furloughed, Rome had sent me a ten page telegram of furlough instructions, which essentially said, "Don't travel." But my wife and I had already shipped our household effects to Rome and packed our car for the trip before we received the notice, which arrived about one minute before the end of my last day in Warsaw. I was worried that if I left Warsaw, Rome would refuse to pay my travel expenses.

I was angry because the furlough, just as I was getting in my car to drive to Rome, reminded me of one of the lowest points in my military service in Vietnam. My artillery battery was stationed at Firebase Barbara, on a mountaintop near the Ho Chi Minh trail, just south of Khe Sanh. We received word from intelligence that an enemy battalion was massing at the base of our mountain. Shortly afterwards, I got a call from our battalion headquarters in Dong Ha, ordering us not to share our gasoline with the anti-aircraft "dusters" assigned to us, because it was too hard to get gasoline out to our isolated position. Vietnamization meant that we no longer had American infantry support. The dusters were used as anti-personnel weapons because they fired rapidly, and each 40 mm round was a tracer. A duster firing was an intimidating sight. They were our best defense against a ground attack. I was angry that someone in our headquarters preferred to see us die, rather than to resupply us with gasoline. Needless to say, we cooperated with the duster crews, who fired thousands of rounds into the area where the North Vietnamese battalion was forming. The attack never materialized.

When the furlough threatened to put my wife and me on the street in Warsaw on a cold November night, I had a "Vietnam flashback" to that night on a mountaintop in northwestern South Vietnam, when the US Army said, "You're expendable." Those two days are forever linked in my mind as the nadir of US Government responsibility. After several angry calls to Rome, I got the Embassy to agree to furlough someone other than me, so that there would be no question that I could travel. Unfortunately, this was a bad omen for my assignment to Rome.

In spite of the fact that my wife and I thought that Rome would be the best assignment we ever had, we didn't enjoy it much. She and I had been thinking about my retiring; so, we decided after a year in Rome that we would come home, and that's what we did. We did as much sight-seeing as we could on weekends and holidays before we left.

I handled some interesting issues in Rome. Italy held the Presidency of the European Union for six of the months that I was there, which increased our workload considerably. We worked with the Italians on EU issues, as well as on the bilateral issues that were the normal workload of the office. The most public bilateral issue was a messy one, a fishing dispute. Before I arrived in Rome, the State Department had been sued by four environmental groups that claimed that the Department was not enforcing a UN resolution stating that no country could fish in international waters with drift nets longer than 2000 meters. When I arrived in Rome, the Department thought that it looked like we would win the case. We argued that we had been very diligent about raising the driftnet issues with the Italians, but we lost. When we lost, we were instructed by the federal court in New York to force the Italians to stop fishing with driftnets longer than those specified by the UN resolution. It was a very difficult negotiation; delegations came from Washington to tell the Italians what was acceptable. It was no longer the State Department's call as to what was acceptable for Italy; it was the US federal court's call. The environmental groups who were the plaintiffs had no first hand knowledge of driftnet practices in Italy; so, they talked to the Green Peace representative in Italy. My staff knew him very well; he was very knowledgeable about the issue, but it was a very strange arrangement. The State Department in effect represented the federal court. The federal court got its information from the US environmental groups; they got their information from Green Peace Italy. This meant that Green Peace Italy was using the US courts and the Department of State to dictate terms to the Italian Agriculture Minister, who controlled fishing. We eventually reached an agreement, but I left before the fishing season started. So, it had not yet been put to the test. We will find out later whether the Italians live up to it.

Q: You were saying in some ways ?

CHAMBERLIN: In some ways of calculating the possible sanctions if Italy did not comply, the value of the US-side trade in all fishery related items was one billion dollars. Most of that appeared to be jewelry, and I always wondered whether by creative use of some Department of Commerce categories, all jewelry could be considered to be fisheries products, or whether the one billion dollar figure simply counted all jewelry without classifying it as a fishery product. Clearly jewelry with a pearl in it, or with a piece of coral on it, could legitimately be included. Nevertheless the figure was never really challenged. There was a possibility of one billion dollars in sanctions if Italy did not follow the UN resolution. The Italians said they were already in compliance with the resolution. The question for the future is whether they will be diligent enough about enforcing it, and the time frame in which they will do it. It's going to be a call for the court and the environmental groups.

Q: Were there any other issues that you dealt with while you were there or was that the main one?

CHAMBERLIN: Another big issue was Italy's space cooperation with the US, both bilaterally and through ESA (the European Space Agency). The most important aspect of our space cooperation was the international space station project. A major part of the station will be built by the Europeans, and another part by the Russians. The Italians have committed about one billion dollars overall to the station. At its own expense, Italy is building a compartment for the Shuttle to ferry items to the space station. In return, the compartment will be treated as an Italian contribution to the space station, and they will get additional access time, experiments and people. So, the total of their participation is pretty significant. But we must make sure that the Italians honor their commitments. That is going to be tough issue, because the Russians have so many financial problems that they have not been able to live up to their obligations with respect to the space station. Russia's delay could hold the whole space station up, and throw the timetable off. We might have to reallocate the financial responsibility and the space station access of all the parties involved, including the Italians.

Unfortunately, I also worked on the tethered satellite issue. Italy built the tethered satellite, which was launched by the Shuttle. It had been launched once before, several years earlier, but the tether had jammed. The Italian Space Agency (ASI) did its best to make a celebration of the experiment. The launch was televised on closed circuit TV in the ASI offices in Rome. ASI was looking for more public support and financing for its program. Ambassador Bartholomew attended as did then Prime Minister Dini. The Italian Ambassador to the US was in Cape Canaveral for the launch, and ASI and NASA arranged televised exchanges by the two sides. The launch went smoothly, but when the satellite tether was almost fully extended, the tether broke. The satellite went drifting into outer space, instead of being pulled at the end of its tether for several days before being reeled back in. The crew of that Shuttle mission visited Italy to try to put the best face on the incident; they made many appearances, including a reception by the Ambassador. But it is always hard to put a good face on something that has gone wrong. After my bad experience with the US-built scrubber in Krakow, I was feeling snakebit by American technology, for although the Italians built the tethered satellite, an American company built the tether that broke. No one knows exactly what happened, but an expert panel concluded that there was probably some small defect in the tether that was not caught by the manufacturer or NASA. The Italians are very good at building high quality, high technology equipment. They are building a very sophisticated antenna for the Cassini mission to Saturn, and in general Italian companies are acquiring a good reputation for producing such items.

During some of my discussions on space issues, I met with senior representatives of STET, the Italian telephone company, which was interested in communications satellites. In an informal conversation, one of the STET executives said to me, "You really don't like me, because you won't even let my little daughter go to Disney World." He was referring to the Helms-Burton Act, that penalized companies, caught by its provisions on trading with Cuba, by prohibiting travel to the US not only of the employees, but of their families as well. This conversation spurred another "Vietnam flashback," this time to my return to the US, when many Americans seemed to believe that all Vietnam veterans had committed some kind of atrocity or war crime during their tour of duty. I had tried very hard in Vietnam to assure that my artillery battery did not shoot at civilians, and I was pleased that I had served on or near the DMZ, where the war was more conventional, and it was easier to tell who the enemy was. In particular, I had tried to avoid hurting any children. So, when a STET executive accused me, even in a friendly and humorous way, of threatening his child, I was horrified. I felt that as a foreign service officer in a friendly country, I was in a more immoral position than when I was in the Army in Vietnam. It strengthened my feeling of unease in serving this government. In particular, it rankled me that President Clinton had avoided the draft and criticized the US presence in Vietnam, at least implicitly criticizing the conduct of myself and other veterans who had answered our country's call. As President, although he criticized the Helms-Burton Act, he put aside his moral convictions and signed it, thereby sending me out to tell Italian businessmen that we didn't want their children in America. Even more frightening is that it apparently worked; STET later took action dictated by the US and removed itself from the Helms-Burton sanctions. After I left the Embassy and returned to the US, I happened to see an episode of the mini-series based on Herman Wouk's *War and Remembrance* on the History Channel. In that episode, which takes place in Italy, the Nazis try to intimidate the Jewish heroine by threatening her child. In the book, the Nazi diplomat Dr. Werner Beck tells her uncle, "But there's also the question of Mrs. Henry and her baby 'rotting here,'" in an effort to force her uncle to make propaganda broadcasts. As she escorts Dr. Beck out, Mrs. Henry says she will try to get her uncle to comply, adding, "You can count on my concern for my baby." As I watched and thought about it, I felt dirty, dirtier than when I had returned from Vietnam, where I had never harmed or threatened a child at all. And so when our government had stooped to the level of threatening children, when life imitated art and I was playing the role of a Nazi, it seemed like a good time to retire.

End of interview